

## Introduction

- Overeating and obesity has been a prevalent problem in America, leading to higher risks for Type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease and stroke (Hales et al., 2017).
- Emotions play a large role in our overall behaviors and every day lives. They help facilitate decision making and influence how we perceive things and form opinions (Gross, 1998).
- Emotion regulation, specifically cognitive reappraisal, is changing “the meaning of the situation” so that the emotional response is also changed (Giuliani, 2013). Difficulties with regulating emotions can be linked to less control over emotions. Since food cravings are similar to feelings, difficulties in emotion regulation may predict difficulties with controlling one’s food cravings and consumption of food.
- In this study, we decided to focus on how emotion regulation influences one’s food cravings by analyzing if difficulties in emotion regulation may predict real-world cravings for high- or low-calorie foods.

## Methods

- Participants were first asked to complete a series of surveys, including the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS; Gratz & Roemer, 2004).
- The DERS measures six different aspects of emotional dysregulation: Nonacceptance, Goals, Impulse, Awareness, Strategies, and Clarity. More specifically, High impulsivity means that an individual has trouble with impulse control. High awareness scores correspond to higher difficulty with having emotional awareness.
- Afterward, participants completed an emotion regulation task in the lab.
- For the following week, participants filled out surveys asking about their food behavior, including cravings for high- and low-calorie foods

“Look”

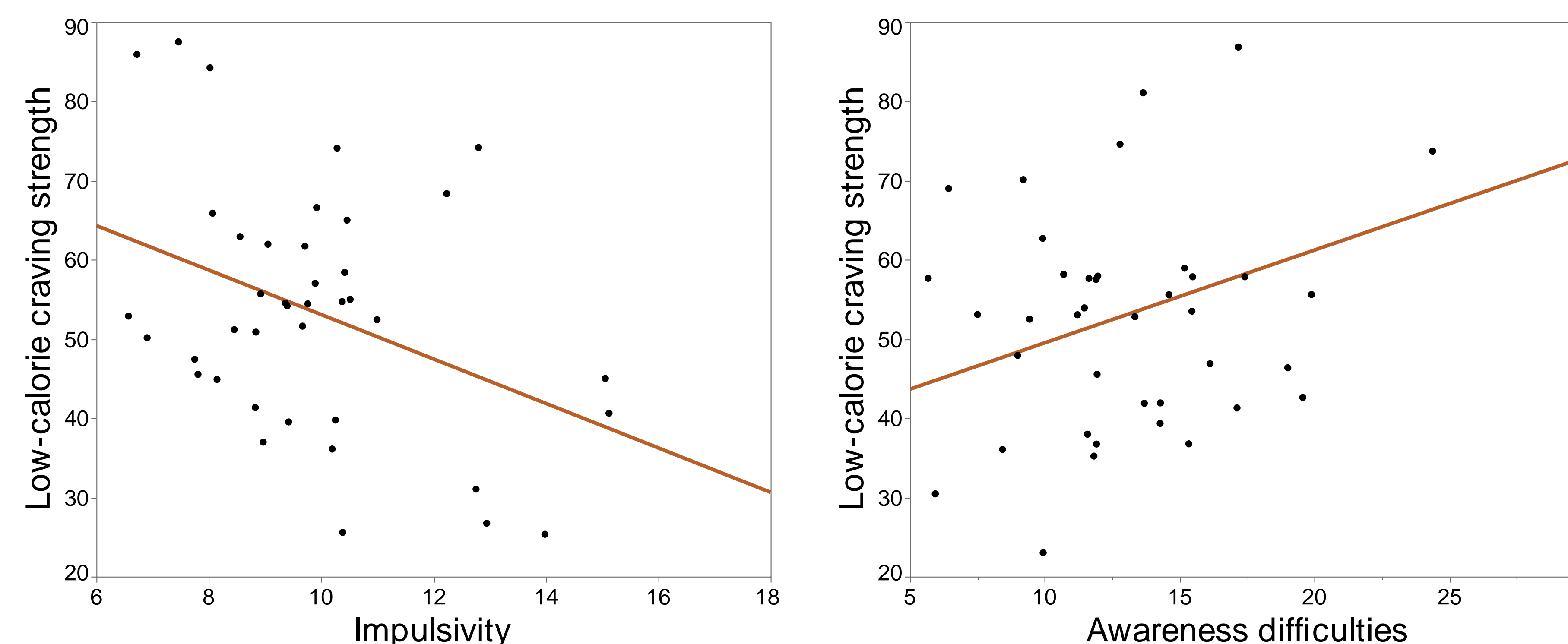
“Regulate”



Craving

1 2 3 4 5

## Regressions Predicting Low-Calorie Food Cravings



- Graphs show low-calorie food cravings predicted by impulsivity and awareness difficulties, controlling for other variables
- High impulsivity was associated with weaker cravings for low calorie foods
- Higher difficulties with awareness were associated with greater cravings for low calorie foods

## Multiple linear regression predicting low-calorie food cravings

	Estimate	Standard Error	p
Intercept	57.50	10.6	< 0.001
Nonacceptance	-0.13	0.46	.78
Goals	-0.30	0.54	.69
Impulse	<b>-2.81</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>.03</b>
Awareness	<b>1.17</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>.04</b>
Strategies	0.04	0.48	.93
Clarity	-0.45	0.63	.48

## Results

- We used two multiple linear regressions to predict average high-calorie and average low-calorie food cravings
- Difficulties with awareness and impulsivity proved to be reliable predictors of low calorie food cravings with conflicting directions.
- We did not find any reliable predictors for high calorie foods

## Conclusion

- As the problem of obesity becomes more prominent, it becomes more important to find solutions to this preventable issue
- In our study, we were able to find that difficulties with regulating emotions, particularly, difficulties with impulse control and lack of emotional awareness were strong predictors of low calorie food cravings.
- Participants who struggle with impulse control may be more likely to have their cravings influenced by foods that instinctively taste good (high calorie, high fat)
- Participants who struggle with awareness may not be aware of their cravings, which can be associated with higher low-calorie cravings as a compensatory mechanism to enhance self-esteem.
- While these results do not show causality, future emotion regulation training experiments, ongoing in our lab, may help clarify if changes in craving appraisal lead to improved emotion regulation abilities.

## References

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